

SEPTEMBER 11 FAMILIES FOR PEACEFUL TOMORROWS

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STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO H.R. 418, THE REAL ID ACT

September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows urge you to oppose H.R. 418, the REAL ID Act, introduced by Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) when the bill comes to the House floor for a vote. The bill's sponsors contend that this measure is necessary to enhance our nation's security. Rather, it will make our highways more dangerous, undermine our security; and impose guilt by association. Further, it will prevent some people fleeing persecution from obtaining refuge.

As an organization composed of family members of those killed in the September 11 terrorist attacks, we are vigilant in promoting measures that enhance our security. We also have a special responsibility to point out measures that use our concern about this nation's safety and security to promote an entirely different agenda. Sadly, that is the case with H.R. 418.

H.R. 418 will NOT make us safer. Rather it will:

Prevent people fleeing persecution from obtaining relief: Some asylum seekers are actually fleeing from the very countries the United States government has labeled as supportive of terrorist activity. Asylum applicants already undergo more extensive security checks than any other foreign nationals who come to this country. Terrorists and others who pose a danger to our security are already ineligible for asylum.

Make our highways more dangerous and undermine our security: The intelligence reform bill that Congress passed last year already addresses the concerns raised by the 9/11 Commission regarding driver's licenses and identity documents. However, Mr. Sensenbrenner's proposal to set federal eligibility requirements for driver's licenses, including restrictions on immigrants' access to licenses, would undermine, not enhance, national security by pushing people deeper into the shadows and forcing many more to drive without a license in order to earn a living. Such a result would severely undermine the law enforcement utility of Department of Motor Vehicles databases by limiting, rather than expanding, government data about individuals in this country.

Impose guilt by association: The proposal to permit deportation of non-citizens who are members of or support any political organization that has used violence, even if the organization has not been designated as a "foreign terrorist organization," is misguided. This proposal to impose guilt by association leaves out what we believe to be a basic component of wrong-doing – intent. With its retroactive application, it could be used to deport long-term, lawful residents, even if the association rendering them deportable occurred decades earlier and was legal at the time.

Congress got it right when it debated and passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 without these ill-conceived provisions that have no place in a measure designed to enhance our security. The ink hardly has dried on this new Act that includes important measures that usefully address some of the issues raised in H.R. 418.

Instead of debating H.R. 418, the House of Representatives should be focused on ensuring the successful enactment of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 and working on comprehensively reforming our immigration system so that immigration is legal, safe, orderly, and reflective of the needs of American families, businesses, and national security.

Founded in 2002, Peaceful Tomorrows is an organization of family members of those killed on September 11th who have united to turn our grief into action for peace. By developing and advocating nonviolent options and actions in the pursuit of justice, we hope to break the cycles of violence engendered by war and terrorism. Acknowledging our common experience with all people affected by violence throughout the world, we work to create a safer and more peaceful world for everyone.

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